

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended): A method of improving the mechanical strength of a membrane comprising the step of:

providing a microporous sheet comprising a blend of an aliphatic polyolefin and ~~less than 10 percent by blend weight of~~ a thermoplastic olefin elastomer selected from the group of ethylene-propylene rubbers, ethylene-propylene-diene terpolymer rubbers, and combinations thereof with the elastomer comprising less than 10 percent by blend weight.

2. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the elastomer comprises about 2 to 10 percent by blend weight.

3. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 2 wherein the elastomer comprises about 3 to 7 percent by blend weight.

4. (Currently amended): The method of Claim 1 wherein the microporous sheet has a Gurley air permeability less than 35 seconds/10cc.

5. (Currently amended): The method of Claim 4 wherein the microporous sheet has a Gurley air permeability less than 25 seconds/10cc.

6. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyolefins selected from polyethylene, polypropylene, copolymers thereof, and blends thereof.

7. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the thermoplastic olefin elastomer is selected from the group of ethylene-propylene rubbers, ethylene-propylene-diene terpolymer rubber, and combinations thereof.

8. (Currently amended): A method of improving the mechanical strength of a membrane comprising the step of:

providing a microporous sheet having a Gurley air permeability less than 35 seconds/10cc comprising a blend of an aliphatic polyolefin selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, copolymers thereof, and blends thereof, and a thermoplastic olefin elastomer being selected from the group consisting of ethylene-propylene rubbers, ethylene-propylene-diene terpolymer rubbers, and combinations thereof, ~~and~~ with the elastomer comprising 3 to 7 percent by blend weight.

9. (Currently amended): A diffusion membrane comprising:
a microporous sheet comprising a blend of an aliphatic polyolefin and a thermoplastic olefin elastomer, the ~~blend~~ elastomer comprising less than 10 percent by blend weight ~~of the elastomer~~, the polyolefin being selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, copolymers thereof, and blends thereof, the thermoplastic olefin elastomer being selected from the group consisting of ethylene-propylene rubbers, ethylene-propylene-diene terpolymer rubbers, and combinations thereof.

10. (Currently amended): The membrane of Claim 9 wherein the ~~blend~~ elastomer comprises between 2 and 10 percent by blend weight.

11. (Currently amended): The membrane of Claim 10 wherein the ~~blend~~ elastomer comprises between 3 and 7 percent by blend weight.